

Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

Gospel text (*Lk 16:1-13*): Jesus said to his disciples, "A rich man had a steward who was reported to him for squandering his property. He summoned him and said, 'What is this I hear about you? Prepare a full account of your stewardship, because you can no longer be my steward.' The steward said to himself, 'What shall I do, now that my master is taking the position of steward away from me? I am not strong enough to dig and I am ashamed to beg. I know what I shall do so that, when I am removed from the stewardship, they may welcome me into their homes.'

He called in his master's debtors one by one. To the first he said, 'How much do you owe my master?' He replied, 'One hundred measures of olive oil.' He said to him, 'Here is your promissory note. Sit down and quickly write one for fifty.' Then to another the steward said, 'And you, how much do you owe?' He replied, 'One hundred kors of wheat.' The steward said to him, 'Here is your promissory note; write one for eighty.'

And the master commended that dishonest steward for acting prudently. "For the children of this world are more prudent in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. I tell you, make friends for yourselves with dishonest wealth, so that when it fails, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. The person who is trustworthy in very small matters is also trustworthy in great ones; and the person who is dishonest in very small matters is also dishonest in great ones. If, therefore, you are not trustworthy with dishonest wealth, who will trust you with true wealth? If you are not trustworthy with what belongs to another, who will give you what is yours? No servant can serve two masters.

He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and mammon."

"You cannot serve both God and mammon"

Fr. Joan MARQUÉS i Suriñach
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Today, the Gospel introduces us to the figure of the unfaithful steward: a man rendering a fraudulent service to his master. He is just a simple steward, but behaves as his master. We must bear in mind:

- 1) Material goods are actually necessary and good, because they come from God's hands. Consequently, we have to prize them.
- 2) But we cannot "worship" them as if they were God and the ultimate meaning or purpose of our existence; we have to be open-handed. Riches are meant for us to better serve God and men, our brothers; not to expel God from our heart and our deeds: "You cannot serve both God and mammon" (Lk 16:13).
- 3) We are not owners, but simple stewards; therefore, not only are we supposed to be trustworthy with whatever we administer, but we are also to make it yield to the best of our possibilities. The parable of the talents shows it quite clearly (cf. Mt 25:14-30).
- 4) Do not let greed drag us along; we have to practice liberality, which is a virtue we should all have, whether rich or poor, each one depending upon his circumstances. We have to give to others!

What if I have enough for my own expenses? Yes, you must also try to increase your wealth to be able to give more (parish, diocese, Caritas, apostolate). Remember St. Ambrose's words: "It is not part of your worldly goods what you give to the poor; what you are giving them is already theirs. Because you have appropriated what has been given for the fruition of all. Land belongs to all, not only to the rich."

Are you so selfish that you only think of amassing material goods, even if it is as the Gospel's steward did, by lying, stealing, by being stingy, hard-hearted and indifferent to others' needs? Do you ever ponder over St. Paul's words? "For God loves a cheerful giver" (2Cor 9:7). Be generous!

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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"I do not have any other means to prove my love to you, but to throw flowers, that is, to let no little sacrifice, no look, no word pass, to take advantage of all the littlest of things and to do them out of love." (St. Therese of Lisieux)

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"Money is not "dishonest" in itself, but more than anything else it can close man in a blind egocentrism." (Benedict XVI)

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"‘They had everything in common.’ (Acts 4:32) ‘Everything the true Christian has is to be regarded as a good possessed in common with everyone else. All Christians should be ready and eager to come to the help of the needy . . . and of their neighbors in want.’ A Christian is a steward of the Lord's goods." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n° 952)